

## **NOXIOUS WEEDS**

### **PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:**

Noxious weeds continue to spread on all lands, reducing natural biodiversity and vegetation production, and leading to soil erosion. BLM noxious weed-infested lands increased from about 91,000 acres in 1985 to about 468,000 acres in 2003.

In 2003, the BLM treated about 354,000 acres using integrated weed management (IWM) methods in cooperation with other landowners and managers: 11,000 acres - chemical; 35,000 acres - biological weed control agents collected, released or expanded; 247,000 acres - biological weed control agents established prior to 2003; 61,000 acres - sheep or goats; 115 acres - manual or mechanical. In some infested sites more than one treatment method is used on the same acreage (i.e., sheep & biological weed control agents). An additional 372,000 acres were inventoried for weed infestations and 107,000 acres were monitored for the effectiveness of the weed management treatment method or methods.

### **ISSUES:**

The BLM's weed management program involves cooperative efforts with other federal and state agencies, universities, county agencies, high school agriculture science classes and private landowners. There is heavy emphasis on using prevention techniques to protect non-infested lands. These IWM programs average less than \$15 per acre for the BLM.

Each year the BLM releases an increasing number of biological weed control agents in more and more areas. Some of these release sites will be used as insectories for joint efforts among federal, state and county agencies to further establish biological weed control agents within the three-state area, and possibly throughout western United States.

At least one biological control agent is established on at least one of the weed species on about 247,000 weed-infested acres. However, most weed species require a complex of 5 or more to contain them at a suitable level.

The use of biological control agents is proving to be a very cost effective method for management of some noxious weed species such as leafy spurge, but it is only one segment of IWM. About 11,000 noxious weed-infested acres were treated chemically and more than 61,000 acres of leafy spurge were contained with sheep or goats.

The BLM has cooperated in preventative and educational programs including: noxious weed videos, brochures, posters and other materials; certified weed seed free forage programs; biological weed control demonstration sites; IWM tours; weed workshops, etc. The Montana/Dakotas BLM staff will continue to provide training and technical assistance to various weed management staffs. We will also support and follow the guidelines set forth in the January 2001 Montana Weed Management Plan in conjunction with other county, state and federal agencies.

### **MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:**

Montana BLM is committed to IWM, which includes prevention, education, awareness, biological agents (insects and plant diseases), cultural practices, chemicals, physical, mechanical, re-vegetation and the use of domestic animals. To comply with both federal and state law, the BLM will continue to use an IWM approach. It is imperative that the BLM and other cooperators continue their efforts or the "Weed Battle" will be lost.

Montana BLM has been using Range Improvement and MLR funds for noxious weed management. Weed management will continue to be a very high priority, but lack of available funding will continue to inhibit efforts at all priority levels. MLR funds from appropriate activities must increase if current weed management programs and levels of success are to be maintained.

### **BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:**

Most landowners are concerned about the spread of noxious weeds onto their land. The method of control of noxious weeds is their main concern. Weed management cooperative groups and individuals will continue to petition congressional representatives for assistance with this problem.

### **CONTACT:**

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